



ASLEF

PUBLISHED BY THE ASSOCIATED SOCIETY OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND FIREMEN

JOURNAL
MARCH 2010



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11 **FREIGHT:** Government freezes as chill sets in on the industry

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A fist clenched but a hand extended

LAST month marked 20 years since Nelson Mandela walked out of the Victor Verster prison, ending 27 years of imprisonment for his 'crimes' of demanding equal treatment of all human beings and calling for an end to the racism of apartheid. Like so many of us I remember that moment on 11 Feb 1990 vividly – but I can hardly believe it is two decades since it happened.

But that is only one of the incredible things about Mandela. There are plenty more. I'm not a man for having heroes – but his is an epic story of courage and conviction that is an example and an encouragement to us all.

I read a newspaper report marking the anniversary that said, 'Mandela no longer speaks in public' and I thought to myself, 'He doesn't need to.' Simply to see the man is a reminder of what we can achieve if we are convinced of our ideals and remain true to ourselves.

And I also realised that these two decades have brought about a change in myself. All those years ago I harboured a deep resentment, even hatred, against all South African politicians who served in that inhuman regime – F.W. de Klerk as much as any. Yet when I saw him on the television again I realised that what he did at that time also bore the stamp of a courageous man doing what he knew to be right.

Mandela's call for peace and reconciliation was as important as his demand for freedom for his people and respect for all mankind.

We remember the image of that clenched fist in the air as Mandela tasted freedom from prison for the first time in 27 years. To appreciate the man fully we should also recall the hand of friendship he then extended to his enemies.

Keith Norman
General Secretary



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ABOUT **ASLEF**

Aslef Journal published monthly by ASLEF

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☎ 020 7794 6406 📧 journal@aslef.org.uk 🌐 www.aslef.org.uk

ASLEF JOURNAL | **EDITOR** Keith Norman | **PRINTED BY** TU ink, London EC2A 4QS | **GRAPHIC DESIGN** Michael Cronin
ADVERTISING Ten Alps Publishing, 9 Savoy Street, London WC2E 7HR | **ADVERTISING CONTACTS** Contact Steve.Forsdick@tenalps.com
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**More than
just a union**



Bletchley take the lead on Abbey Flyer

WHEN the Department for Transport published a consultation document about replacing the Watford Junction to St Albans Abbey rail service with trams, the Bletchley branch asked the Executive Committee to respond opposing the scheme, writes Richard Fisher.

National Organiser Simon Weller convened a meeting between branch representatives and James McGowan and David Gould of Head Office's policy department. They prepared a draft response which we discussed and amended at the branch. This then went to the Executive Committee who agreed that our arguments were sent from national level to the Department for Transport (DfT).

We became aware of the proposal to replace the rail service with trams last October when Lord Adonis, supported by Conservative controlled Hertfordshire County Council, announced the plans (see December 2009 Locomotive Journal).

The current 'Abbey Flyer' as the service is colloquially known, is exclusively operated by London Midland Drivers based at Bletchley, so not surprisingly it led to an extensive debate at the December meeting of the Bletchley Branch.

Concerns were raised not only on the impact on jobs at Bletchley of closing the route to heavy rail, but also on the wisdom of the proposals as a whole. We argued that

- the introduction of trams will not make any new journeys possible, as they do not extend services into Watford and St Albans town centres, but merely replace the existing heavy rail services with light rail.
- closing the route to heavy rail would eliminate any possibility of extending services to London Euston, a long-held aspiration of users of the route. The consultation document suggested through running would not be possible because of a lack of paths between Watford Junction and Euston. However, London Midland have recently introduced new Euston to Watford Services, why could these not continue to St Albans Abbey? Further, not all of the planned services were introduced - so additional paths do exist!
- the supposed benefits of the proposal is that it will provide for additional services through the provision of a passing loop and for earlier and later trains. So why can this not be done for the existing heavy rail service?
- are the prospects of lower wages and one person operation the means of running additional trains at minimal cost?

Bletchley Branch would like to place on record our thanks to the union for its help in ensuring that the voice of our Branch will not go unheard.

Newsinbrief

● GRADUAL INCREASE IN FREIGHT ON RAIL

Government figures show that the percentage of the total market moved by rail in the latest available (2007) figures amounts to 8.3%. This compares with a figure of 7.4% in 2003.

● STRANDED WITH A POLITICIAN



If they had to spend time with a politician on a desert island, 40% of Brits would choose Barack Obama according to a poll by PRS for Music, the organisation that collects royalties on behalf of composers and songwriters. Gordon Brown and David Cameron together mustered just 6% while the second most popular was 'None - I'd rather be alone'!

● BBC WANTS TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR MONEY!

The makers of a BBC 2 documentary series want to speak to tube and train drivers among others, to find out how we spend their money and to 'paint a clear portrait of spending habits in the 21st Century'. They want to begin by having informal telephone chats rather than begin filming right away. If you're interested, contact samantha.williams@bbc.co.uk or ring her on 020 7557 2315.

● QUESTIONS FOR TRANSPORT LORD



Because of the increasing number of Lords in government (like Mandelson and Adonis) the Upper House has started to have a 'minister's question time'. It's not all that gruelling, as it only allows three questions and lasts a quarter of an hour, but last month saw the transport minister kick off the new procedure.

He was asked about funding national bus concessions, increasing aviation emissions and whether passenger satisfaction should become more important in bidding processes for franchises. All responses were predictable (he wants 'a wider range of passenger satisfaction targets in franchises') - until he announced that, "No complacency' are my middle names'.

So do we refer to him now as Baron Andreas No Complacency Adonis of Camden Town?

● NEW TRAM FOR NEWPORT SAY AMs

A report to Welsh Assembly members last month recommended Newport should consider a tram-like light rail system. An investigation by the Enterprise committee on the future of Welsh rail also called for improvements to the Severn Tunnel and the London-South Wales service.

The Assembly welcomed the report stressing that Wales currently has no urban light rail system and said it felt Newport, Swansea and Cardiff could all benefit from such a scheme.

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74 DRIVERS' JOBS AT RISK AT DB SCHENKER

THE Executive has been considering its response to reports that 74 drivers' jobs are at risk in DB Schenker (formerly EWS) - and that management are seriously considering the closure of the Ayr Depot.

The union has

- written to the company advising that it will not extend Rest Day Working after 31 March without a satisfactory resolution to our concerns over redundancies
- begun collating Driver Vacancies throughout the rail industry.
- set in motion a report about our policies towards recruitment in the rail industry
- continued to develop our strategic response towards long term developments in rail freight
- arranged to receive regular updates on the position.

District organiser Nicky Whitehead and the DBS Company Council stressed that the 74 figure is 'neither accepted or final' in their report to the EC. The Ayr branch has also called on the general secretary to 'investigate the behaviour of DBS management in withholding knowledge of the sale of the Traincrew depot at Ayr for residential homes' and called on the union to contact South Ayrshire Council about the issue which 'would devastate rail freight traffic in the region'.

- This is one of the issues that will be discussed at the two Open Freight Forums that have been organised in Doncaster on 31 March and Bristol on 7 April. Contact your local branch secretary or the National Organiser, Simon Weller, for details.

EUROSTAR STRIKES CALLED OFF

Strikes planned by ASLEF at Eurostar for 5-9 February and 1-9 April have been suspended following talks yesterday between the Chief Executive of Eurostar and a union team led by general secretary Keith Norman.

'A provisional agreement has been reached in the dispute, which concerns the falling value of our members' international subsistence allowances,' Keith says. 'It will be put to the Executive Committee for a formal decision when it meets in ten days' time.'

MOSS TWITTERS

How will ASLEF members react to the age of twitter? Alan Moss, secretary of ASLEF's national Virgin Trains safety committee, is determined to find out. He says, 'In an attempt to move forward with technology I've set up a Twitter account in my role as a health and safety rep. I'll make it short and sweet and newsy for a trial period to ascertain if it's worth doing. I'll let you know if I keep it going.'

Alan's Twitter account is at <http://twitter.com/AMOSASLEFSAFETY>

ONE TRESPASSER, THOUSANDS DELAYED

Tens of thousands of commuter journeys were delayed for over an hour last month when a trespasser walked on to one of the busiest railway lines in the country. Power had to be turned off at Vauxhall in London after the trespasser wandered on to the line at the start of the morning rush-hour.

Tube Lines compensation rejected

AN independent adjudicator has dismissed a claim by Tube Lines for a further £327 million of public funds. The Tube Lines consortium had been seeking the money for costs it has incurred arising from delays to the upgrade of the Jubilee and Northern lines.

'Private firms look on the public purse in the way a house burglar looks at an open door,' says ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman. 'They want to put nothing in, and take everything out.'

He says the efforts of Tube Lines to snatch £327 million 'to pay for its own estimating incompetence' showed 'astonishing brass neck'. While Keith accepts that delays have meant Tube Lines' profits will be reduced, he has no sympathy with the company.

'When the East Coast Mainline didn't make the money its managers had predicted, they walked away. When Tube Lines don't make the profits it forecast, they want to be compensated.

'If this is reasonable, then the reverse must also be true. But how many rail firms have you seen giving money back because their profits were unexpectedly high?

'The model for public-private partnerships has for decades been one whereby the private investor is protected and the public service is exploited.

'We need a completely different approach. Hopefully today's sensible decision will be the first step on that journey. But I wouldn't put money on it.'

BOLIVIA TO NATIONALISE AND RENOVATE RAIL

Bolivian President Evo Morales plans to nationalise the country's railway network, believing that renovation of the country's rail freight infrastructure would lead to increased opportunities for trade for Bolivia and its neighbours

Morales said last month that in 2010 existing private railway lines will be transferred to the state and will transect the country and link with adjoining lines in Chile and Brazil.

News of the project follows recent talks between Bolivian, Chilean and Brazilian governments to create an inter-oceanic freight railway, which would give both Bolivia and Brazil access to Chile's Pacific coast.

FCC franchise could be ended

A TRANSPORT minister Sadiq Khan said last month that the government is considering nationalising First Capital Connect, the franchise that runs the Thameslink service.

When Kelvin Hopkins challenged him to take over the firm which 'has shown itself totally incompetent and interested only in making money, not providing a service', the minister told the Luton North MP that 'all options were on the table'.

ASLEF members exposed a massive shortage of train drivers in the company when they began to decline voluntary overtime working towards the end of last year. The service collapsed, leading almost 5,000 people

to sign a petition on the Downing Street website calling for FCC to be stripped of its franchise due to a 'gross lack of competence'.

Keith Norman said he understood the concerns, but accused the government of continuing to ignore the 'blatant and obvious' fact that the franchising system was inherently flawed. He said, 'Rushing round trying to sort out individual companies over which it has no control is not going to be successful in the long-term.'

'Mr Khan told the House of Commons that the Department for Transport is having daily conversations with FCC to ensure a 'radical improvement' of the service. If the Department needs to do this, it should take control of the

franchise and implement improvements - rather than having to appeal for favours from a profit-driven private firm.'

- **When the Thameslink programme is completed over the coming five years, the company will need an additional 80 train drivers according to transport minister Chris Mole. He was responding to a Parliamentary question by Bedford MP Patrick Hall.**
- **The programme includes providing 92 air-conditioned Electrostar carriages, more capacity, improved stations, a train frequency of 2/3 minutes and additional destinations.**

GS meets rail minister

IN a recent meeting with Lord Andrew Adonis, the Secretary of State for Transport, Keith Norman urged the minister to continue trains from Kings Cross to Glasgow Central rather than stopping at Edinburgh Waverley and to continue to have Directly Operated Rail Services Limited running the operation.

We also raised concerns about the industrial relations outlook for the East Anglia and C2C franchises as we are not convinced that management will be motivated to work

with the union during the remainder of the contract. We asked to have discussions with the successful bidder before they take over in April 2011.

In addition we wanted the government to retain revenue and freight facilities grants at current budget levels in order to assist the rail freight industry in the medium to long term, and to see the Department for Transport intervene to support both intermodal and deep sea container traffic as key growth sectors of the rail freight industry.

The union also seeks an examination by the Business Secretary of how the government could support the rail freight industry by linking any government support for wider industry - such as motors - to the use of rail freight.



FALL IN CHUNNEL FREIGHT

IT emerged last month that freight traffic through the Chunnel dropped by 5% last year compared with 2008, with 1.18 million tonnes of freight moved. At the same time truck volumes fell from 1.25 million trucks to 769,261 - a drop of 39%.

Freight operators accused EuroTunnel of having rules about the tunnel's use which have stifled the growth of rail freight in the UK and across mainland Europe.

Under current rules, EuroTunnel has to split crossings 50:50 between shuttle services and rail crossings. These crossings are then split by 50% again between EuroStar services and rail freight for rail crossings, and between road freight and road users for shuttle services.

Champ helps union learners box clever

FORMER professional world champion boxer Mickey Cantwell joined ASLEF's celebrations as we re-launched the First Great Western learning centre at Paddington reports project worker Emma Ramsay.

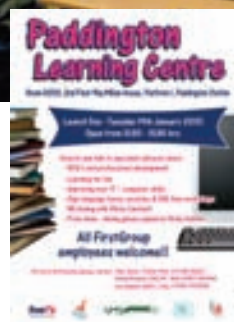
Mickey is now heading up 'Boxing Futures', an organisation that helps young boxers gain qualifications and new skills. He says his work in this area means he understands the importance of what we are trying to achieve through Proud to Educate, and he's offered us support with future activities.

For further information see the Proud to Educate section of the union's website www.aslef.org



▲ Mickey shows his old skills on wii.

► Poster advertising the opening of the centre in Room B203 at MacMillan House



THE TORIES CALL IT DEREGULATION – WE CALL IT DOWNRIGHT DANGEROUS



Victoria Phillips,
Head of Thompsons
Employment Rights
Unit - warns that the
Conservative's appetite
for de-regulation could
cause serious problems
for safety in the workplace

DAVID CAMERON is warming to his 'slash and burn' approach towards health and safety regulations. All is revealed in his party's policy paper 'Regulation in the Post-Bureaucratic Age: How to get rid of red tape and reform quangos'. It plays to fears and prejudices about red tape and health and safety that are stoked up by the media - and manipulated by employers who want fewer workplace safety laws.

In what appears to be 'Law Reform meets the X Factor' the Tories will invite nominations for 'the most poorly designed and burdensome regulations, which would be repealed within 12 months unless they were modified or approved by Parliament'.

There is nothing wrong in responding to public opinion - but the man in the street isn't going to be leading calls for the scrapping of legislation. It all has the whiff of John Major's 'Cones Hotline' which became an over-sized



albatross around his neck.

Will the public honestly get to vote on whether the employer's duty of care or personal protective equipment is knocked out? Or will it be left to rags like *The Sun* to whip up votes on the basis of myths and lies - like bans on children playing conkers and the prohibition on hanging baskets?

And what will the impact be on union members whose safety at work depends on those regulations?

STAR WARS

Even more dangerous to people's safety at work is the Tory plan for a 'Star Chamber' to enforce a 'One In - One Out' requirement for new laws.

Any new law will only be introduced if 'old' laws are removed - thus, Cameron says, reducing the 'regulatory burden' by 5%. If a minister can't find that 5%, they will have to beg or borrow regulatory savings from colleagues in other departments.

The fight for a Corporate Manslaughter Act was a long one under Labour and the Tories only accepted it with firmly gritted teeth. It would never have become law under a Tory government insisting on scrapping other laws to make way for it. Exactly the same would be the case with the unions' campaign on asbestos related pleural plaques. But rest assured they will find laws to scrap the Working Time Directive (WTD), as David Cameron has pledged. This is despite the fact that the WTD is a vital health and safety measure which prevents workers being forced into long and dangerous hours - as well as enshrining the right to paid holidays.

AN INSPECTOR DOESN'T CALL

Tory plans for workplace inspections will warm the cockles of many an employer's heart - but will strike fear into those they employ. The

Conservative paper says inspections cost too much and besides regulated organisations 'face periodic and, all too often, inconsistent and intrusive visits from officials checking whether they are complying with each set of regulations'.

There is evidence that the number of workplace safety inspectors and inspections has fallen alarmingly in the UK. Most businesses will only be inspected once every 11 years. Yet the Tories would 'drastically curb' the powers of government inspectors - including the Health and Safety Executive and safety sections of the Office of Rail Regulation - by allowing firms to arrange their own, externally audited, inspections. If they pass, firms are then allowed to refuse entry to official inspectors thereafter. The external audits would be filed with the regulator 'like filing annual accounts at Companies House'.

It is the same farcical self regulation that worked so disastrously in the financial industry.

SAFETY, NOT GIMMICKS

The only enforcement they do talk about is 'MOT style' inspection reports. Rather than being aimed at preventing workplace accidents, the objective is to prevent regulatory 'scope creep' where laws are applied too strictly by 'overzealous inspectors'.

The Tories' gimmicky approach to health and safety and to light touch regulation may get the vote of certain sections of the business community and those who swallow health and safety myths. But it will put workers lives at risk.

Thompsons for one will cry murder - and point the finger at David Cameron when workers die because a health and safety law that protected them in their work was repealed by this populist approach to a serious subject.

FORMER DRIVER WINS COMPENSATION CASE

AN ASLEF member and former EWS driver who suffered a horrendous car accident has received £360,000 in compensation. The 39-year-old, suffered extensive injuries to his back and neck after his car was forced off a busy dual carriageway by a 4x4 towing a horse-box in September 2006.

The freight train driver suffered from soft tissue injuries leaving him with ongoing pain and limited movement. He also suffered other milder injuries to his head, shoulder and chest.

He has since started his own business as a locksmith but is unlikely to achieve the same level of earnings he had while working on the railway.

After the incident he contacted ASLEF who instructed Thompsons Solicitors to pursue a claim for compensation.

ASLEF backed General Election candidates in your District ...



District: 5
Constituency: Dagenham
Candidate: Jon Cruddas

BEFORE Jon became an MP, he worked in Number 10 Downing Street, liaising between the government and the trade unions, helping promote an agenda for working people. In 2007, Jon stood for election as Labour's deputy leader and after winning the most first round votes, ended in third place. Jon has written extensively on politics and is a leading commentator on housing, immigration and public services. He has campaigned with courage against right-wing extremists and for government assistance for victims of asbestosis. Jon attended a rail policy seminar organised by the union in Parliament in 2008 and has spoken at ASLEF training courses.

Contact to offer assistance: www.joncruddas.org.uk



District: 3
Constituency: Crewe and Nantwich
Candidate: David Williams

DAVID is a former apprentice and shop steward at the local car factory and a shop steward at Crewe Bus Station. David worked for ASLEF MP, the late Gwyneth Dunwoody, and is now the Political Officer for USDAW, campaigning alongside ASLEF to promote the trade union agenda for Labour's manifesto.

David says, 'I campaigned with Gwyneth against rail privatisation. Although Labour has invested billions, private ownership remains a barrier to a better railway. That's why I support ASLEF's policy of not-for-profit franchises. We want the money invested in the network not shareholders.'

Contact to offer assistance: 01270 589132 or e-mail david@davidwilliams.org.uk

Unions lobby Parliament on maintenance cuts

THE end of January saw ASLEF, RMT and TSSA members rally at Parliament to lobby MPs about Network Rail's decision to dismiss 1,500 railway maintenance workers. The unions argue that cutting jobs responsible for inspecting and repairing the track, signal and overhead lines will threaten safety..

ASLEF members told their MPs

- Network Rail has told its four contractors that it will reduce the amount of track it replaces 'significantly' this year.
- Regulators at the Office of Rail Regulation cut Network Rail's call for



ASLEF members, officers and EC rally opposite Parliament. Pictures Sean Seymour

£29.1 billion over the next accounting period to £26.7 billion – a shortfall of £2.4 billion.

- Network Rail admitted in

its 2009/10 business plan that a 'huge reduction in track renewals expenditure' will have a 'major impact on the supply chain'. A call for '20% - 30% less heavy materials' will have major implications for the rail freight industry.

- The cuts make a mockery of the government's stated intention to 'bring forward infrastructure projects to boost employment'.
- Six recommendations from the Grayrigg crash report have still not been implemented, making cuts totally unjustified.

◀ MPs: ASLEF members enjoy a joke before the serious business of convincing politicians



District: 7
Constituency: Swansea East
Candidate: Sian James

SIAN JAMES has been MP for Swansea East since 2005 and as Chair of the All Wales Rail Group has been an active voice for improvements in Welsh rail infrastructure. She has strongly backed ASLEF's recent campaigns on the East Coast mainline, electrification and freight on rail, writing to ministers on the union's behalf. Sian has also consistently raised the performance of First Great Western in Parliament on behalf of passengers and industry employees

Contact to offer assistance: Charles White on 07792 069583 or sianjamesforswanseaeast@googlemail.com



District: 1
Constituency: Croydon Central
Candidate: Gerry Ryan

GERRY is a union official with the CWU, a long-time local councillor and a life-long activist in Irish and other community organisations. He says a large part of his campaign has been dedicated to exposing Boris Johnson's promises to the people of Croydon to extend the tram network which had massive public support. This part of south London needs accessible reliable surface transport as it has no tube network. I have received a pledge from the Labour Assembly Members that this will be a high priority when Labour has a majority and Mayor in City Hall.

Contact to offer assistance: gerry.ryan@croydonlabour.org.uk



ASLEF's Open Freight Forums

ADVANCE NOTICE

The union is organising two open freight forums to discuss, debate and inform ASLEF's freight strategies.

Join fellow members at

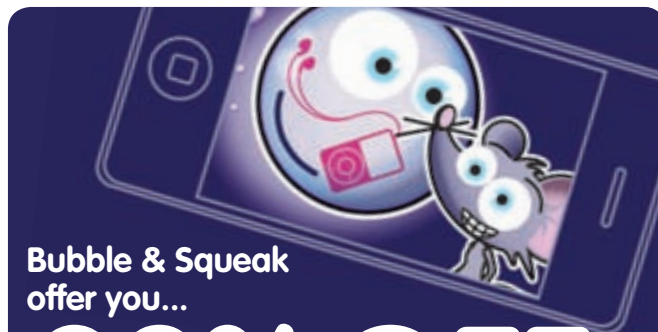
Doncaster Trades and Labour Club
on Wednesday 31 March 2010 at 11 am

Bristol Marriot Hotel, Lower Castle Street
on Wednesday 7 April 2010 at 11 am



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ASLEF

NORTH OF THE BORDER



Freight train drivers in Scotland are facing difficult times. The recession, allied to a blind free market approach to the industry, has led to uncertainty and insecurity across our membership.

We also face a General Election in the coming months which will drastically affect attitudes towards transport, including new projects like the Glasgow Airport Rail Link (GARL), backed by Labour but rejected by the Nationalists even though there is now evidence that Network Rail chief Iain Coucher proposed obtaining finance for the project by borrowing against NR's Regulated Asset Base.

These will be challenging times for us all. Never have trade unions been more important to working people. In all this uncertainty let me give you one guarantee. ASLEF will not let you down.



Keith Norman, General Secretary

TOUGH DECISIONS IN A HARSH CLIMATE



- a review of the rail industry in Scotland by ASLEF's national officer in Scotland, Kevin Lindsay

TRAIN drivers in Scotland face an unprecedented attack on their livelihoods - and for once it's not ScotRail drivers on the receiving end. The freight industry is under massive attack as the privateers look to squeeze every penny out of our industry and into the shareholders pockets. DB Schenker has announced its intention to close the depot in Ayr, leaving 25 drivers out of work and the southwest of Scotland without a major freight depot.

The DfT is also consulting on the decision of the East Coast franchise holders (bizarrely themselves!) to stop running trains London to Glasgow via Edinburgh. This could cost another 15 drivers their jobs.

We must stop this 'merry go round' system of franchising which has freight companies competing against each other for the same contracts. The railway must be about serving communities, not speculators. The free market and the franchising system have failed in the railway. It is with that in mind that we must continue to campaign and take our message to our political allies and foes.

MILKING THE RAILS

ASLEF supports and campaigns for the Labour Party to which we are affiliated - but Labour must support taking back our industry into public ownership. Every penny that is milked from our industry into dividends for shareholders it is a penny less that could be re-invested into improving our railway. We

demand that the ScotRail franchise is returned to public ownership and will campaign to have that policy included in Scottish Labour's manifesto.

We will also continue to support and back Hugh Henry's Private Member's Bill for better protection for public service workers. This Bill will give rail workers the same protection under law as emergency service workers. But we don't think this Bill alone will eliminate attacks on workers. That is why we will work with the British Transport Police on education programs and continue to demand prosecution of any offenders - whether it's a minor offence or not.

A GROWTH INDUSTRY

Where we see investment in the railway we will work with others to improve and grow the railway. ASLEF is willing to take tough decisions which we believe will see the railway enhanced and extended.

Many readers will be aware that First ScotRail and the Scottish Government want the Airdrie to Bathgate line to become 'driver only' in December. This depot opening creates driver jobs when others are facing redundancy. That is why I, along with the First ScotRail company council, recommended to our Executive Committee that the DOO (driver only operation) extension was acceptable.

We have had 'driver only' in Scotland since 1984 and now around 55% of our membership drive in this mode. This does not mean we will



allow DOO to come in all over Scotland. There is no doubt that a conductor with an operational role is to the benefit of all - but then again it was surely better to have driver's assistants in cab. Sadly this practice ceased in the 1980s. But railways and technology move on - and our job is to safeguard the drivers' role and develop policies which enhance our members' careers.

In this area the ScotRail company council have led the way, maintaining that it is conditions rather than pay that should be at the corner stone of our negotiations. This year will be no different. We want improvements in sick pay, travel facilities, ill health arrangements and rostering arrangements - and to eliminate differences in driver salaries.

These are issues which will improve the driver's job. That is what ASLEF stands for.



Crisis In Scotland's Rail Freight : Union Reactions



ASLEF is leading the campaign to increase rail freight in Scotland - and we're using every means at our disposal to get our message across, says ASLEF's Scotland Executive

Committee member Hugh Bradley ...

OVER the last 12 months we've

- pushed for the development of Grangemouth as a freight hub, stressing its importance to the wider Scottish economy, at the Grangemouth Transport Forum
- continued to campaign against Longer Heavier Vehicles (LHVs) whose introduction would have a disastrous effect on rail freight
- met both the Scottish Transport Minister and Transport Scotland to argue for freight support
- submitted a formal response to the recent Rail Freight Policy Consultation document - including recommendations to continue the Freight Grants to assist the Operators
- argued for gauge enhancement of the East Coast Mainline to W10 as an alternative to the West Coast Mainline and also from the Central Belt to Inverness and Aberdeen - which would allow the 'high cube' 9'6" containers to be moved.

We want to ensure that our railway system is in a fit state to play its part in delivering the projected future increases in traffic - and to contribute to the reduction of carbon emissions.

We've all heard figures about rail freight growing by 60% since privatisation and how it's projected to double over the next 20 years. But that's not what we're seeing in the current recession.

NO RECESSION? TELL DBS THAT!

The most recent announcements about staff that DB Schenker considers surplus is a bitter blow. We've only just emerged from a round of 159 driver surpluses, with the union managing to keep within the industry all those drivers who wanted to stay.

Now they have declared 74 driver surpluses on the Network side of the business, which would impact on Millerhill and Mossend depots, and the closure of Ayr depot on the Energy side of the business making 25 drivers redundant. This comes on top of drivers making sacrifices by going on 'reduced hours contracts' to keep fellow drivers employed.

The DBS announcement came the week after the country officially - but somewhat tentatively - came out of recession.

We know it will be some time before traffic levels pick up. Freight companies have been hit by

- reductions in all traffic flows - including coal where there are presently 28.1 million tons at power stations which, where possible, use gas instead
- 40 % reductions in Network Rails requirements for track renewals
- declining demand for aggregates, cement and steel because of reductions in building programmes and manufacturing
- less potash and waste trains.

Intermodal traffic has held up well - but the revenue for moving containers is down by some 17%. The FOCs estimate it will be at least 12 months before we see any improvement in the situation.

DOGS FEEDING OFF DOGS

Meanwhile we have been provided with massive evidence of the absurdity of the privatisation of the freight sector - the only sector of the railway with no government control. We have seen the farce of

- GB Railfreight losing its contract with Royal



Mail to DBS

- Freightliner Heavy Haul losing its Conoco oil contract to DBS
- DRS losing its Stobbs traffic to DBS and
- DBS losing its aluminium contract to GBRF.

This is the legacy of the 'dog eat dog' mentality of the bidding process when contracts are up for renewal. It is difficult for our members to stomach, especially when they have made real sacrifices to safeguard jobs. Some DBS depots have worked on reduced hours contracts. DRS members have seen the withdrawal of retainer payments and salary cuts. Freightliner Heavy Haul drivers are putting up with a pay freeze this year and 1% pay rise next year.

UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

The Executive Committee is very conscious of the plight of drivers in the rail freight industry. That is why

- we are working on a Freight Drivers Charter which would recognise the difference between freight and passenger drivers. Hopefully it will be debated at this year's annual conference (AAD).
- we are holding Freight Forums in Doncaster and Bristol to engage our freight driver members, hear their concerns and proposals and assure them we are doing everything possible to safeguard jobs.
- producing a specialist Freight Journal and
- looking for the TOCs - and indeed FOCs if they are recruiting - to give freight drivers first refusal of vacancies.

These have been unprecedented times for us all. But I assure you that ASLEF has done everything in its power to safeguard jobs - and that it will continue to do so.



SCOTS FIRST TO ROCK PARLIAMENT

The Scottish three-piece band Biffy Clyro became the first rock band to play a gig in Parliament last month. They played for half an hour in a marquee on the Commons terrace in an event the Speaker, John Bercow, said he felt would help politicians to 'reconnect' with modern Britain. BC singer Simon Neil said it was 'surreal' and 'the weirdest place we've ever played'.



GARL 'COULD HAVE GONE AHEAD'

It has emerged that the proposed Glasgow Airport Rail Link (GARL) need not have been ruled out. The Scottish Parliament's Finance Secretary, John Swinney, a Scottish Nationalist, had blamed Westminster for not providing funds and said Scotland could not afford it on its own. It has now emerged that funding was available as the Network Rail chief Iain Coucher had approached the minister suggesting borrowing against NR's Regulated Asset Base.

ONE IN FOUR LABOUR MPs TO STAND DOWN

Almost a quarter of Scotland's Labour MPs plan to stand down at the general election. Nine has already formally announced they will not contest their seats and there could be more retirements from the 39-strong Labour ranks before the election.

Rail is essential to Scotland's future



Labour is pro rail. A convenient, cost effective public transport network is important for our vision for Scotland's future, opening up our country to deliver opportunities for business and hardworking Scots writes Iain Gray, Leader of the Scottish Labour Party ...

THAT is why my first manifesto pledge for the 2011 Scottish elections is to reinstate the Glasgow Airport Rail Link (GARL).

The SNP cancelled GARL last September. It was a political decision that flew in the face of unions, local councils and the Big Six business organisations in Scotland - the CBI, FSB Scotland, IoD, Scottish Financial Enterprise, Scottish Chambers of Commerce, and the SCDI.

Labour refused to support John Swinney's budget for 2010-11 because he refused to change his mind and put the project back in the budget. The cost of this lack of vision and commitment from the SNP is 1,300 jobs and over £300m of investment in the West of Scotland, but also a massive missed opportunity to invest and develop our infrastructure for the good of the whole Scottish economy.

As Transport Minister in the previous Labour Executive I signed off the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link along with GARL. One of the first things the nationalist did in 2007 was drop EARL. Now they have done the same to the west of the country.

Connectivity and transport infrastructure are the key to business development in 21st century. That's why rail has such an important part to play.

I am proud to say Scotland's largest rail investment to date was introduced when I was Transport minister, bringing in 22 new trains to reduce overcrowding and improve timetable reliability.

Part of the package included for the recruitment and training of extra train drivers to improve reliability, tightening Scot Rail's performance targets to aim for better time keeping and less cancellations.

We also introduced automatic ticket barriers at Waverley, Haymarket and Queen Street stations and 10 self service ticket machines to cut down on fare dodgers.

This comprehensive package of measures brought real improvements to Scotland's rail network and multi-million pound investment.

Labour's commitment to Scotland's railways includes understanding that we need to use devolution to work constructively with

Westminster colleagues to protect railway workers and ensure Scotland is at the heart of developing the UK network - like the speedy intervention of the UK Government to take over the running of the East Coast Main Line.

When we were concerned about staff cuts and a reduction in the quality of service on the East Coast Main Line, we lobbied our Labour colleagues at Westminster for greater protection for jobs and standards being brought back up for commuters.

Scottish Labour is committed to a plan for a high-speed railway line between Scotland and London to boost our economy and reduce our carbon emissions. Ideally the line should be built simultaneously at both ends to give Scotland a head start in securing the link.

Scottish Labour is working on these and other aspects of our pro-rail agenda, so we can hit the ground running on our return to power in 2011 and get Scotland back on track.

TWO FALL FROM TAY AND FORTH BRIDGES

Two workmen died after falling from two of Scotland's main railway bridges within hours of each other last month, one from a ladder and the other from a ledge. Network Rail has launched an investigation into the deaths.



COMPANY ROUND-UP



FIRST SCOTRAIL

Two new Scotrail depots have opened in the last year. Shields Maintenance Depot on the southside of Glasgow has 16 drivers

and is in the process of a £24 million improvement project, including a maintenance facility for the new 380's class electric trains and a new wheel turning lathe building. Drivers' routes vary from Cathcart circles to Gourock and Weymess Bay on the Renfrewshire lines.

The other new depot at Bathgate has a complement of 26, working into Edinburgh and North Berwick, and later in 2010 will be driving into Glasgow via Airdrie when the newly-electrified £312 million pounds project will re-open links with Airdrie and Bathgate. Three new stations will be opened at Drumgelloch, Caldercruix and Armadale.

We have also been in consultation about the new class 380s Desiros. Siemens are manufacturing 38 new units. Our involvement has mainly concerned the new cab layout and we have visited their factory and test tracks outside Dusseldorf. Thanks to Martin Dye who sits on the cab ergonomics group for ASLEF.

Thanks to 'Wee' Joe McGilvray who was co-opted for six months and a welcome to the Council for Ayr driver Alec McCallum. Alec will be taking care of drivers in depots at Ayr, Gourock, Dumfries, Stranraer, Corker Hill, Shields and Glasgow Central.

A. Fergusson, Secretary, Scotrail Company Council



CROSSCOUNTRY

We are approaching the third year of the harmonisation deal and the full integration of

the ex-Central Drivers into the CrossCountry fold.

The Council believes the company does not need Rest Day Working. We have said we are always available to discuss the issue but before we would grant an extension we would need to address the establishment calculator, incentives for rest day working and route and traction issues at Birmingham.



DB SCHENKER

There is no good news for the DB Schenker depots in Scotland. When the PT&R sub group met management to discuss the energy depots, we were informed of the proposal to close

Falkland/Ayr depot and were told there were surplus drivers at Longannet and Hunterston, who they wanted to retain on reduced hours contracts. Letters have been sent to all affected drivers at these depots seeking volunteers for redundancy while the council is still in talks about the future of Falkland.

In a meeting about the network business we were told there are surplus drivers at Mossend and Millerhill, where again volunteers for redundancy have been sought. The council is looking at any mitigation to avoid reduced hours.

I have just learned that DBS has lost the Alcan contract to GBRF which will greatly affect the future of Fort William depot - but TUPE regulations may apply so they may be protected and transferred to GBRF. No good news I'm afraid - but we will battle on.

John Gahagan, Chairman, DBS Company Council



EAST COAST MAIN LINE

The hand-over of NXEC to the government-run ECML has been a

worrying time for all staff in the northern region. Rumours were rife regarding the planned December 2010 timetable, with the removal of the Glasgow Central paths from Kings Cross which would have an adverse effect on all drivers in Edinburgh and Newcastle. The company council has raised these issues at meetings with the transport secretary, Lord Adonis, but the issue of how many trains will continue to run through to Glasgow is still to be clarified. The company council will not accept any compulsory redundancies, or movement of drivers. 'Work to men' remains the policy of the ECML company council.

Rab Wicksted, Secretary, ECML Company Council



DIRECT RAIL SERVICES (DRS)

This recession has left freight drivers very worried that their jobs

are under threat due to the downturn in goods being transported around the network.

The threat of redundancies has been hanging over drivers in most of the freight operating companies. ASLEF has done remarkably well in retaining employment for their membership - but there is still concern that the next round of redundancies could create casualties.

The answer lies politically. Pressure has to be exerted onto politicians to save and develop the UK rail freight market but unfortunately politicians seem to 'talk the talk' without 'walking the walk'. We've had the soundbites - now we need action.

Tam McKendrick, DRS Company Council



URGENTLY NEEDED: DISCIPLINE TRAINING FOR MANAGERS

WE'VE recently had a catalogue of cases showing managers breaking their own policies when trying to dismiss ASLEF members working for LUL.

Despite the disciplinary procedure saying that, 'Dismissal without notice should only be given for the most serious offences e.g. physical violence, theft, fraud or gross negligence' – it's become the first port of call recently.

Your reps have successfully fought attempts at local disciplines (LDIs) to include up to ten years previous attendance records or to attach holistic reports (despite the fact these are intended to be used for safety reasons).

The harassment policy is also being misused. In one case it was used and when management didn't like the outcome they tried to re-run the case using the disciplinary procedure. In other cases they have chosen to ignore the harassment policy completely in order to get someone disciplined super fast without a full investigation.

Cases handled correctly are now becoming the exception. .

Meanwhile LUL has told the union it would like to see changes to the disciplinary procedures (maybe because they haven't got a hang of the current ones?)

They'd like

- Duty managers to give final warnings at LD1s
- Indefinite length cautions

Union threatens dispute over automatic doors

STEVE GRANT, the union's London's full time officer, says that if Automatic Door Opening (ADO) is introduced without ASLEF agreement there will 'inevitably' be a dispute on London's Underground (LU) system.

'We are far from convinced from the evidence of the working of the system in other countries that this system is reliable,' he says. The union also argues that the underground in London, obviously the oldest as it was the first in operation, is utterly unique and needs to be treated as a one-off. 'We have concerns about how failures have been reported world-wide and doubt that the statistics we have been fed are reliable.'

ADO is a system of opening the doors automatically once a train is fully berthed in a platform. The new stocks being introduced to LU – 'S' and '09' stock – and those of the last 15 years, like '95 and '96 stock, have been fitted with the ability to operate it.

The union has put two further arguments in support of its opposition to ADO. Firstly we have pointed out that if it was introduced drivers would have to actively press a button or switch to prevent the doors opening if they became aware of a hazard as their train came into the platform. This is in contrast to the present arrangements whereby the driver has nothing like this to do. He or she only needs to decide whether it is safe to open the doors - and then to do so.

Secondly, ASLEF believes that the more the design of a train takes away tasks and decisions from the driver, the greater becomes the risk of him or her making a mistake.

'The paperwork we have been given by management in support of the introduction of ADO makes all sorts of unconvincing assumptions,' Steve says. 'A major one is that the equipment will work as designed and will be reliable. A network that deals with over a billion passenger journeys isn't one to take chances with.'

- Having a single manager sitting in judgement at Company Disciplinary Interviews (CDIs)
 - Inviting the investigating manager to attend the CDI so that when your rep tears apart the evidence against you – they can redo it as they go along!
- Quite simply, ASLEF will not agree to any procedure that is worse than that we currently work to. And all these four points are worse.
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- This report was compiled by Andy Viner, Terry Wilkinson, Steve Grant, Tier 2 Health and Safety and Trains Functional Council reps

JARGON CORNER: LINE JURIES?

WHEN ASLEF reps in LUL first heard the phrase 'line juries' their imaginations were triggered.

Was this some new form of discipline where you have a SPAD and are judged by twelve of your colleagues?

Nothing that interesting, unfortunately.

It appears to be another attempt to bypass elected trade union reps. It involves releasing a number of staff so that managers can try to persuade them that all the things they have in store for us are good - and then they claim they did it at our request!

Law ends at Edinburgh

AT the risk of provoking readers to say, 'Oh no! Not another retirement story from Edinburgh No 1!' – here is another report of a retirement from our branch! This time it's Bobby Law's turn. Bobby's taking early retirement on medical grounds due to the discovery of an eyesight problem. He's otherwise in great shape and it was quite a blow to him that he was suddenly forced into finishing a few years earlier than he had planned.

It would be fair to say that - like many drivers of his vintage - Bobby was never afraid to speak his mind, have a good moan, or even a rant! However Bobby was held in high regard at the depot and is a much appreciated and respected character.

Bobby's retirement party was held on 9 January. The extremely cold weather may have cut the numbers able to attend but it did nothing to cool the atmosphere. A great time was had by the man himself, his family, friends, and colleagues. As ever Bros Neilson and Johnston were keen to show off their moves on the dance floor, but fortunately Alec didn't feel the need to take his shirt off on this occasion. Bro Rashid also ensured that none of the ladies present were short of a dancing partner, though he did pause briefly to assist me with the presentation.

The branch presented Bobby with a framed ASLEF retirement certificate, a card carrying the good wishes of his workmates, and some John Lewis vouchers which I'm sure Bobby and his wife Irene will put to good use.

On behalf of all of us at Millerhill, I'd like to wish Bobby and his family all the very best for the future.

H Ezzedine, LLC Rep, Millerhill



LLC reps Hussein Ezzedine and Farooq Rashid make the presentation to Bobby Law who is retiring early



It might look as if they are in a lift, but this is Ayr branch saying farewell to Frankie Carroll!

Farewell to Ayr's Frankie

ON 17 January the Ayr branch made a presentation to Frankie Carroll who retired from his job as a driver for First Scotrail. Hugh Bradley (Scotland's EC member) and Ayr's Branch Secretary Tony Kahler did the honours at Ayr Railway Club

'Frankie' as he is affectionately known retired after 37 years service. He started at Ayr as a Fireman in 1973 before moving to Glasgow Central to gain promotion to Driver, returning to Ayr as a Driver in 1979.

Frankie held every position within ASLEF

locally, from Branch Secretary, Chairman, LLC Rep and Health and Safety Rep - and was the first Driver to be elected to Company Council. He's been a true inspiration to us all over the years.

I am sure I speak for Drivers past and present when I say it has been a pleasure working with the 'Wee Man' over the years and on behalf of them all I wish him and his wife a long and very happy retirement.

**Alec McCallum,
Company Council Rep**

Festive fun at Feltham



The Old Southeronians meet on the third Friday of every month

THE Old Southeronians held their annual Christmas Party at the Feltham Railway Club on 19 December. For the second year running the Feltham Electric branch made a donation which covered the cost of the buffet, raffle and a Christmas drink. Everyone enjoyed and appreciated the kind gesture.

The retired members and their wives were joined by Shaun Seymour, Gary Weller, Gary Channing, Mark Bratt, Alex Shaw, Jeff Smith and Ray Benton. Although a few members were unable to attend due to the bad weather, those who did spent a pleasant afternoon reminiscing about 'the good old days'.

The Southeronians hold their meeting on the third Friday of each month at the Railway Club Feltham starting at 12pm, and welcome any retired or active railwaymen who would be interested in joining them.

Thanks to Shaun, Gary and the Feltham Electric branch for their continued support.
Fred and Sooty Green

Edinburgh gets networking – or necks working!

EDINBURGH'S latest reunion – or, as Rab Wicksted calls it 'The Auld Boys Do!' – saw 50 members turn out at the Beachwood Bowling Club to enjoy a fine three course meal. After this, Branch Chairman Chris Barry asked District Officer Kevin Lindsey to give a short report on the health and wealth of ASLEF.

The branch had been kind enough to invite Retired Members Section committee members Ray Jackson, Alan Taylor, 'Big Jack' Howsley and myself to the meeting, and it fell to Ray to present 50-year ASLEF membership medallions to Tam Campbell, Bob Ewan and Harry Millar.

An ASLEF retirement certificate was given to Harry

Aitken. Harry started at Alloa in 1965, moved to Grangemouth, finally to Edinburgh in 1978. At the tender age of 61 and with 36 years membership of ASLEF he has decided to exit stage right and join the Retired Members Section (RMS).

Ray gave a short report on the activities of ASLEF's RMS, its membership of the National Pensioners Convention and campaigns for decent state pension, free national travel, a good health service, and free care should it be needed. He thanked the union for its support for the RMS and for allowing membership to continue, allowing some to achieve the magical 50 years.

Finally Terry Higgins, the East Coast LLC rep, announced



Last December RMS committee members happily accepted an invitation from Edinburgh to represent the Section at the branch reunion

the winners of the evening's free raffle draw. Terry was in fine fettle, and did not take any prisoners. Terry would call upon his history of each winner, who had run the gauntlet to gain their prize as Terry related in

banter their pedigree, much to the delight of the winner and all present.

Once proceedings were done we got down to networking over a glass or two.

Peter Smith, Reporter, RMS

Reports and recognition at Kings Lynn

THE well-attended final 2009 meeting of the King's Lynn Branch welcomed National Organiser Simon Weller, Executive Committee Member Nigel Gibson and retiring Company Council Member Peter Baines. We also welcomed back Andy Taylor to mark his retirement and make a presentation.

Simon Weller, who had lived in the area while at a local college, gave a detailed report on a recent

dispute on NXEA. The NXEA members solidarity was exemplary, resulting a negotiated settlement. Simon also spoke about the proposed move of our Head Office, the healthy and improving financial position, union training courses and political involvement. He argued that while Labour had not delivered on many things that trade unionists may have expected, 'it remains the only



King's Lynn branch pays its tributes to Andy Taylor who has sadly left the service

choice for a just and fair society'.

Nigel concentrated on problems facing ASLEF members working in freight, the growing crisis in First Capital Connect, the government taking over the East Coast Main Line Franchise, the Royal Mail dispute, disciplinary issues and pensions.

Branch Chair Tony Watson thanked Simon and Nigel and invited questions before inviting Secretary Mark Steele to place on record the branch's thanks for the immense contribution made by Pete Baines, who has recently retired from the FCC Company Council.

Retirement presentations were made to Driver Andy Taylor. Andy's train was involved in a

horrific high speed collision with a tractor on the 'Fen Line'. The tractor driver was killed, but miraculously Andy escaped with minor injuries despite the extensive damage to the cab of his Class 365 EMU. Andy struggled to regain his confidence but at the age of 51 decided to leave the railway for the sake of his long term health. Andy asked that a significant part of the money collected be donated to the ASLEF Orphan Fund and said he'd be back as a Retired member.

A subsequent informal session included local karaoke and the mystery of 'whodunit' at various watering holes!

Mark Steele, Secretary, King's Lynn branch

Upcoming events

● EASTLEIGH REUNION

The next Eastleigh Reunion will be held on Saturday 13 March 2010 at the Eastleigh BRSA Club from 12 noon until 18:00 hours. Drivers retired, working and new are welcome.

● NORWICH DEPOT ANNUAL REUNION

The Norwich Depot reunion will take place on 16 April at the Arkwright Club, Hall Road in Norwich from 19.30 until 23.30. All retired members, including those from neighbouring branches, are welcome. There will be a free buffet and drinks will be available at low club prices.



These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the **ASLEF Journal at 9 Arkwright Road London NW3 6AB** or by email to **journal@aslef.org.uk**. Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can. This month we continue our **STAR LETTER feature**. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

It's not just paying subs

I WOULD like to thank both the members and officials of ASLEF's Croydon Tram/Light Rail branch for their help and support during my recent disciplinary hearing. Thanks especially to Konrad who was at the time the branch industrial relations representative, who I know put himself out in his own time.

It should be remembered that membership of ASLEF is not just paying sub every month. It is also being able to call on the union to help with both work and personal cases.

I received a favourable outcome to my case and I know it was down to ASLEF that I kept my job. Once again, thanks to you all.

Richard Kitchener, still a driver!

Farooq moves on

AFTER seven years as secretary of the Edinburgh No1 branch, I would like to thank all branch members for their backing whilst I carried out this role. I certainly enjoyed the support that I received and I hope I provided you with help and assistance when it was needed.

I will be leaving the branch secretary role in the capable hands of Bro Gary Hart and I am moving to a new role as LLC rep for the drivers at Millerhill depot. This is a challenging prospect and I will endeavour to do my best for you all.

I would also like to thank the staff at Arkwright Road and Kevin Lindsay for all their help over the years.

Farooq Rashid, Millerhill

More on those ghastly 66s

I READ the letter in the February Journal from Driver Phil Garner regarding the Class 66 cabs with interest - and also with anger. I know only too well from bitter experience just what it's like working on these dreadful locos.

I've worked on these ghastly machines for nearly ten years, and, as Bro Garner rightly states, nothing has changed. All freight drivers know just how bad the 66 cab working environment is.

One of my main reasons leaving my last employer was to get off Class 66's. I am very happy working for my present company, with the exception of driving the 66 stablemate - the Class 67!

SLOW DOWN CAR DRIVERS AT LEVEL CROSSINGS

SAFETY at level crossings would be greatly increased if restrictions were put on road vehicles. One suggestion could be a 20 mph speed limit for 50 metres either side of crossings together with speed humps like those installed outside schools.

Where barriers are installed rising hydraulic bollards could be fitted, as used on city 'bus only' routes. This

would deter those who chose to ignore red lights. This could be funded by local government.

I know pedestrians can cause great distress but people need to have some sense of self-preservation. Remember, in most countries railways are not fenced at all.

T. J. G. Cadby, retired former Westbury driver

Why did no one find them to be a health hazard when they first entered our beloved land? Surely someone must have seen the potential problems with both the 66's and 67's?

We should not be exposed to the noise and vibration levels or suffer the abysmal ride quality, poor heating, lack of cooling, terrible build quality or inadequate and uncomfortable seating. At least our 67s are cleaned by our Wrexham colleagues who do a sterling job but it seems this duty is being taken away from fitting staff.

I took these issues to the top level when I was health and safety rep in my previous employment, but without success. I felt constantly fobbed off and saw no follow-up action. As usual senior management put anything affecting train crews at the bottom of the priority list. If they had to endure a 10 diagram on a 66 or 67, you'd see these issues addressed without any delay!

I only hope that Bro Garner's hopes for 2010 are realised, and that we can all carry out our safety critical jobs in a safe and comfortable working environment.

So come on ASLEF - you need to step up a gear with the Squash campaign and get things moving quicker with cab issues. Otherwise conditions will only get worse and our lives will continue to be a misery.

Hopefully in a couple of years Bro Garner and myself won't have to raise the same

subject on these pages.

Andy Czerniakiewicz, Driver - Wrexham

Highly commended Colin

WHEN I was medically restricted and transferred permanently to a non-driving role I couldn't have had better representation than I received from Colin Smith and John Evans. It was second to none. They should both be highly commended by the union not only for what they have achieved for myself, but for all the drivers at Northern.

On behalf of my family and my self I would like to say thank you for your advice, support and friendship during this traumatic time.

Rob Rotheram, Stockport

We're not New - we're Labour!

I NOTICE that Gordon Brown began the General Election campaign talking about 'New Labour'. The party should show pride in its past instead of trying to re-brand itself.

Anaurin Bevan, the Labour minister who introduced the National Health Service, would turn over in his grave if he heard today's Tories promising to look after the health service. When they were the Opposition during Attlee

Labour government they opposed the introduction of the NHS at every step of the way.

Anyone in the Labour Party who doesn't have pride in Labour's past should join another party.

P. Begley, retired member, Bedford

Emotion at ASLEF generosity

I HAVE been a member of this Union for 23 years, and in that time the moans and groans about being in the union have never changed. The most popular moan is that 'the ASLEF diary is the most expensive diary in Britain'. Well let me tell you that I only had to call on the union once and thanks to ASLEF and its reps, I kept my job. For that alone my membership was worth every penny of subscription that I have paid.

I have just gone through 18 very traumatic months. I was diagnosed with lung cancer, now thankfully in remission. Towards the end of my treatment my wife and I lost our eldest son, in very tragic circumstances. During my treatment my body took a bit of a bashing, and it will be a while before I will hopefully get back to something like full strength. Because of my ill health I have had to retire from the railway, something made easier thanks to the Ill Health Retirement Policy that ASLEF's representatives negotiated with my TOC.

But the main reason for being a member of ASLEF is the comradeship with drivers in every single depot in the country. I attended Colchester Branch meetings regularly and in that time we agreed to make donations to hundreds of branch appeals. I never thought of what it could mean to someone until I recently became the recipient of one of these appeals. Now I know.

On behalf of my wife and myself, we'd like to thank you all from the bottom of our very emotional hearts for your kind words and generous donations. Thanks also for the generous donation from ASLEF's hardship fund and for all the help we received from the local reps at Colchester and our full-time officer.

Once again, thank you to the colleagues I know - and an even bigger thank you to all those colleagues I have never met.

Martin Tansey, now retired train driver, Colchester

Thanks for backing

WE wish to place on record our sincere gratitude to those branches and individuals who supported us during the Southeastern Trains Company Council Election. It will be an honour to represent all Southeastern Drivers. We believe we face a difficult period, and it will be the responsibility of us all to face any

PARIS BY BIKE FOR KIDNEY CHARITY



David gets on his bike for kidney appeal

ON 30 June, I'm going to cycle from London to Paris as a fundraiser for the charity Kidney Research UK.

I am a First Scotrail driver based at Oban and a member of the ASLEF Glasgow branch. My wife Eilidh required Kidney Dialysis treatment approximately three years ago due to renal failure. She was extremely fortunate as she only had to wait about two years on the transplant register

before the opportunity of a donor kidney was made available. It is not uncommon for patients to spend many years on the transplant register. Sadly, in some cases, a transplant opportunity may never arise. I volunteered to donate a kidney but unfortunately after numerous medical tests I was found not to be a suitable match

Eilidh received a telephone call on the evening of the 6 December 2008 and we quickly made the 100 miles trip from Oban to the Western infirmary in Glasgow where she successfully received her transplant the following day.

Incidentally, I received the phone call at work 10 minutes before departing on the 18.10 from Oban to Glasgow Queen Street. Thankfully most passengers understood when I left!

The Kidney Research UK website explains my quest in more detail at <http://www.kidneyresearchuk.org/events/detail/cycling/147/london-to-paris-cycle-ride>

or you could contact Liz McGuinness at the charity on 01228 510620 or 07711 307682

David Turnbull, Glasgow branch

challenges that may lie ahead. As Council representatives we urge you all to work with, and support us. It is vital that we work closely with Staff Representatives and in the Branch room. We must not allow ourselves to become isolated. Let's all put our experience together and move us forward collectively. We look forward to working with you over this period of office.

Steve Burgess and Bill Williams, Southeastern

Appealing Ronnie's first run for charity

I AM running in the London Marathon 2010 on behalf of Princess Alice Hospice in Esher (www.pah.org.uk). This isn't just my first marathon - it's my first long run since I left school!

I am a driver for Chiltern Railways and based at London Marylebone. I hope having a letter in the Journal might help highlight what I'm doing and perhaps find me some donations. I have a 'justgiving' webpage all set www.justgiving.com/ronniegunning.

I am trying to use every possible way of raising as much money as I can for the

hospice - which does so much for lots of people.

If you want any more information, please contact me. Many thanks.

Ronnie Gunning, Marylebone

Morse message

I'M writing to thank everyone who supported me in my recent election for DFC rep.

Special thanks to Terry ('Rest Day') Falon, Bryan ('Biscuit') Duncan and Ricky ('Sour') Plum. I'd also like to thank Steve Austin on a fair and well-contested election. I hope he does as good a job at DFC level as he did as LDC. Paddington LDC and branch will miss him greatly.

Thanks also to Stan Moran who has worked tirelessly helping me throughout my time on the DFC. And - I will be back!

Robert Morse, Paddington

Union raises over £2k for Holly Appeal

I WOULD like to express my sincere gratitude to my ASLEF brothers and sisters who contributed to the Holly Ireland Appeal, organised by Bro R Wickstead

(Edinburgh No 2 branch).

My wife and I were presented with a cheque for £2,015 by District Organiser Kevin Lindsay. This has been added to other fundraising efforts and donated to the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Edinburgh.

Holly spent a lengthy period in this hospital after suffering a severe episode of meningitis that has left her with many disabilities. It was a humbling experience to read the many encouraging letters from the 55 branches up and down the country who kindly donated.

Craig Ireland, Driver, Edinburgh

Alternative driving duties

I WOULD like to take this opportunity through the Journal to thank district organiser Kevin Lindsay and local branch secretary Alan Reid for their greatly appreciated recent endeavours, assisting me to find alternative employment within the driving grade.

I would also like to pass on my sincere thanks to my colleagues who have wished me well in my new role.

Once again, many thanks ASLEF – you're so much more than a badge and a diary!

Andy Kelly, Depot Driver, Yoker

Many thanks, District 4

IT IS with great sadness that I resign from District 4's Women's Representative Committee, where it has always been an honour to represent my district and union. I am sure that my successor will show the

same pride and commitment.

I believe the equality committees are vital to our trade union and I know the hard work will continue in order to ensure true equality within the rail industry. I will always support their work and wish them all every success.

My thanks also to District 4 Organiser Nick Whitehead who has always supported ASLEF's equality committees and has been a leader in pushing forward the equality agenda. My thanks also to all the branches within ASLEF, and especially my own 4.

In sisterhood,
Pauline Cawood, Leeds

Experiences from Oz

G'DAY colleagues!

I was one of 15 drivers who emigrated early in 2009 to Western Australia to work for ARG (Australian Railroad Group). The company had previously employed native Australians, Kiwis, and South Africans. I was lucky enough to be chosen when they decided to choose British freight drivers.

I'd worked on the footplate for over 29 years and when this chance came I grabbed it. ARG are coming back to the UK to recruit in early summer and will be advertising next month.

My advice is to think carefully before applying. Life here is really good, but it has its pitfalls. The heat in summer can be unbearable. It's OK sitting on a beach in over 40 degrees, but a different matter if you're

working in it for long periods. You will also do as much ground work as driving.

If you're prepared to work hard the rewards can be very satisfying. The opportunities for your children are immense and the outdoor life style is excellent. The cost of living is a bit more than the UK, but the wages are comparable.

I enjoy working for ARG and everyone who emigrated seems content with their lot.

Nick Clarke, ex Ferrybridge Freightliner Heavy Haul

Irresponsible my eye

I READ the article in the February Journal where both John Humphrys and a transport minister said we FCC drivers were being 'irresponsible' for not working rest days.

I'd like to ask them both if their rate is the same as ours - £38,000 - and if they work Monday to Friday often starting at one, two or three in the morning in order to get to work for the early shift.

On the days I didn't work my rest days I saw my daughter and grandchildren and they saw a change in me. Having the time off made me relaxed and happier.

I'd like Mr Humphrys and the minister to work our hours for a while. And I'd like ASLEF to tell the press that we were never on strike. We worked our conditioned hours and took our rest days off to be with our families.

Is that 'irresponsible'?

Ralph Cooper, First Capital Connect

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

To advertise in the ASLEF Journal please contact Sarah Francis on 020 7317 8600 or sfrancis@aslef.org.uk



NXEA 2009 STRIKE BADGE commemorating solidarity of ASLEF members. Purchase (£3 plus p&p) from NXEA Branch Secretary or District Council 5 Secretary. Contact M Steele on. 07788 153954. Proceeds to District Council 5 Education Fund and ASLEF Fighting Fund.

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ANNIVERSARY (1984-2009) BADGES £5 each plus £1 p&p. Last ten available. All proceeds to Justice for Miners. Contact L. French at 55 Mill Road, Gillingham, Kent, ME7 1HW or phone 01634 576058 for details.

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CITY OF LONDON BADGES, one 10-year and one depot badge. Depot badges are numbered 1-150. There are only 150 of each. Price £5 plus £1 p&p. All profits to City of London branch funds to acquire a branch banner.

Further information or orders to Colin Dawson 01689 849 543 or 22 Hutchison Road, New Addington, Croydon, Surrey CR0 0BD.



LONGSIGHT BRANCH has produced a Commemorative Badge Limited to 500 Numbered Copies. They are available for £5.00 plus £1 p&p from the Branch Secretary Fred Clarke at 80 Brookfield Avenue, Poynton, Stockport, Cheshire, SK12 1JE. Please make cheques payable to F. Clarke.

DIESEL HYDRAULIC ITEMS wanted by collector. Anything considered, especially speedos, power handles etc. Rob 01822 833 921



FIRST EDITION of the only recognised Tram/Light Rail ASLEF Branch. CROYDON TRAM/LIGHT RAIL No1 (270) Badge cost £5 each with £1 P&P. Cheques payable to: "CTLRNo1" and sent to David Brinkworth, 6 Peregrine Court, 47 Albemarle Road, Beckenham, BR3 5HL or via Paypal david@brinkworth.me.uk

ASLEF TRAIN DRIVER collects ASLEF/railway badges, signs, shed plates, signalling items, etc. Phone Mark on 01562 746537 or (mobile) 07789301551

ARTHUR GRIFFITHS JUST 41

LAST Boxing Day our colleague, Arthur Griffiths, or 'Arf', as he was known, passed away to the dreaded disease of cancer at the young age of 41. He leaves his loving wife of 16 years, Sheryl, and two sons, Tom 15, and Jack 13.

The funeral took place on 14 January at Swansea Crematorium. The church was full to standing as colleagues and friends came from near and far to pay their last respects.

Arthur contracted cancer five years ago, and fought it with courage and dignity to the extent that he had a period of remission when he returned to main line driving. Unfortunately the

cancer returned with a vengeance and this time the dreaded disease won.

Arthur was a Swansea boy, who, with his two boys, had season tickets at the 'Swans' football club.

Arf's father, Richard, worked in BR's finance department at Westbury, where Arf himself worked from 1988-95. He started as a second man at Pantyffynnon in 1987, returning to Swansea after his spell at Westbury.

Finally to Sheryl, the boys, Tom and Jack, and to all Arthur's family, our deepest and sincere sympathy at your tragic loss.

John Rossiter, Secretary, Swansea Branch

DOUBLE LOSS FOR KING'S LYNN

IT IS with sadness that I have to report the recent passing of two King's Lynn Drivers, who both gave over 40 years of loyal service to ASLEF and the rail industry. However it is pleasing to note that both had a long, happy and largely healthy retirement.

Bert Addison - aged 84 - was a colourful character, easily remembered for the variety of cravats which were his fashion trademark. He often wore them with shirts from 'Sami's' emporium (down Commercial Street near Shoreditch). He was a keen gardener and could be seen daily on his allotment next to the railway line, right up to his final days. Our thoughts and best wishes go to his wife Millie and the family.

Stan Porter - also aged 84 - was another big character. Stan would be seen carrying a small suitcase rather than a normal driver's bag for all his kit. Later in his career he would be seen carrying a briefcase as he fulfilled the role of LDC Chairman. Stan also held a number of positions in ASLEF's King's Lynn branch during his railway career.

Our thoughts and best wishes go to Stan's widow, son David and the family.

Mark Steele, Secretary, King's Lynn Branch

JIM GUILLIATT INSTRUCTOR WITH TALES

IT IS my sad duty to report the death of retired Immingham Driver/Instructor Jim Guillatt.

Jim died on 1 November and a celebration of his life was held at the Scartho Methodist Church ten days later.

Jim instructed at Immingham and had plenty of amusing tales about this time

spent at Ilford and lodging in the hostel.

To his son, Jeff who is one of our brother drivers at Immingham, and to all Jim's family, we offer our deepest sympathy.

David Patrick, Immingham branch

JOHN WOODHOUSE SAD LOSS FOR SALTLEY

IT'S with regret that I inform you of the sad loss of retired driver John Woodhouse of Saltley aged 76. John fought throat cancer for nearly two years before losing the battle.

John, a keen golfer, started railway work on 26 November 1951 at Rye and retired at Saltley. Our thoughts are with John's family at this sad time. This truly kind gentleman will be sadly missed by his friends.

Adrian Harnett, Secretary, Saltley branch

DAVE TYRRELL CHINGFORD AND DSM

IT IS my sad duty to inform you that Dave Tyrrell, formerly of Chingford depot, passed away on 2 January.

Dave started his railway career in May 1958 at King's Cross (Top Shed). He transferred to Chingford in 1968, working here as a driver until 1994 and then as a DSM until he retired in 2004.

Dave served as a Local Level Rep for over 20 years, representing his colleagues at Chingford with great distinction.

He retired to Malton in North Yorkshire and his funeral took place at York crematorium on 14 January. It is a measure of his popularity that so many of his former colleagues were there to bid him farewell. Our sympathies are with his wife Doris, daughter Jill and son Terry at this time of great loss.

S. P. Jestico, Secretary, Chingford branch

KEEPING TRACK



The winter of 1910 was trying for union organisers as the January Journal of that year reported - and 1960 was an equally bad time for diesel traction enthusiasts ...

100 YEAR AGO

Organising Secretary H. Parfitt reported on bad weather and 'badly' speakers in the January 1910 Journal ...

"The next day I moved on to Gateshead - where we had about 10 inches of snow lying in the streets for several days. However, I fixed up a meeting and went on to York on Sunday, the 30th ...

... I had not addressed a meeting at York since the early "nineties". On that occasion the then Executive Council and the Trustees were splendidly entertained by the York Branch. Platform speakers were not so numerous as they are to-day, and I had to do more than my fair share, as "stage fright" had taken possession of two of our intended speakers; they approached Mr. Sunter (the late General Secretary) and begged off on the ground that they were "badly" - a Northern expression for feeling ill - but he only let them off upon their promising never to grumble with other people's speeches again, a promise which they readily gave - but soon forgot."

50 YEARS AGO

Toram Begg's 'Scottish Opinion' in the March 1960 Journal recounted the distain of steam drivers for his enthusiasm for new diesel units ...

"In my December article in the Journal I indicated that enthusiasm existed for the new diesel units now operating certain of our Edinburgh - Aberdeen expresses. I also mentioned that I had travelled on them to gather material for a broadcast.

During that radio talk I expressed my personal opinion as a driver, very much in favour of the new form of power ...

"The moment of truth" then descended upon me. Not one, but many, of my old mates started to verbally "kick me in the pants". When I met them in the street I was greeted with such "cracks" as "... not a patch on the Gresley Pacifics". "Diesels or electrics will never do the job like the old steam engines", and so on - ad nauseam."

● Extracts selected and edited by Jane Pimlott

The burning flame of Toram Beg



Each month I seek out extracts from Locomotive Journals from 100 and 50 years ago which we publish under the heading 'Keeping Track', writes Jane Pimlott. I look through old Journals and find pieces that give a flavour of how the union worked and the background to political events. One contributor from 50 years ago who impressed me by the liveliness and forcefulness of his writing was the author of a monthly column called Scottish Opinion. His name was Toram Beg ...

I WONDERED what his position was in ASLEF; he was clearly a driver, and seemed very knowledgeable about the railways but he didn't write as if he was an ASLEF representative. Once or twice he mentioned gathering material for a radio broadcast and writing an article for a magazine. Was he a journalist? It seemed unlikely that Toram Beg was his real name.

Out of curiosity I looked him up on the internet, and discovered that Toram Beg, was a pseudonym meaning 'Wee Norman' in Gaelic. His real name was Norman McKillop, and he was a driver at Haymarket, Edinburgh. What's more, I discovered that this was the same Norman McKillop who wrote 'The Lighted

Flame', the history of ASLEF from its beginnings in 1880 to nationalisation in 1948. The then General Secretary, J.G. Baty, wrote in the Forward to 'The Lighted Flame', in January 1949 why Norman McKillop was asked to take on the job.

WRITING THE FLAME

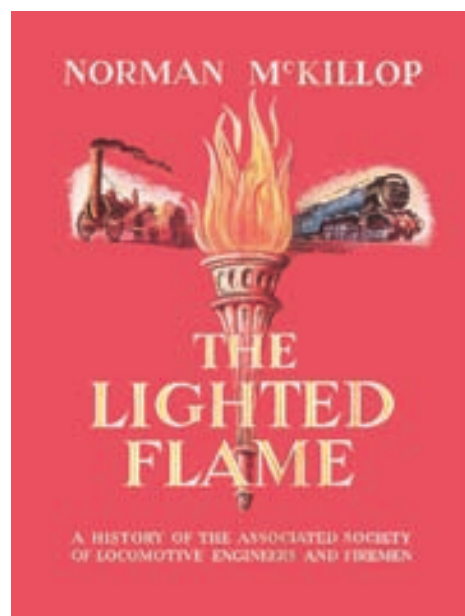
'We knew precisely what in fact we hoped for from the author of our History, whomsoever he might be; first of all, of course, he must be a true writer, trained and skilled in the selection of material and in the narrative art. Second, he must bring enthusiasm to the task. Third and last – and very important – he must be able to write, not only with insight, but with knowledge – concrete, detailed, intimate, first – hand knowledge of the work that is done and of life as it is lived, day in and day out, by the fraternity of the iron road.'

Norman McKillop was born in 1924 of Gaelic-speaking Highland parents. He began his railway career with the old North British Railway as a cleaner and fireman and by 1949 was a top-link driver at Haymarket. As a locomotiveman he was a master and a lover of his craft: he founded the Haymarket Mutual improvement class and was a lecturer at classes on both sides of the border. He began to train as a writer and free-lance journalist in his cleaning days and for three years he wrote for the American Press Service of the International Transportworkers Federation.

CONVINCED TRADE UNIONIST

When deafness ended his footplate career he became Editor of the Scottish edition of the British Railways Magazine. He wrote a number of technical books like 'Enginemen Elite' and 'Ace Enginemen', in which he explored his own and his colleagues working methods, an

◀ **A family friend said 'it is difficult to imagine that so slight a person could have had the strength to drive a steam locomotive, let alone to have fired one in his younger days'. The same informant mentioned that 'Norman was attracted to the draught Bass at Glasgow St Enoch Station'!**



autobiography, 'How I became an engine driver', and 'Western Rail Trail', describing a journey across Canada with his wife Mary, mainly by the Canadian Pacific route.

He was devoted to ASLEF and the trade union movement, once being described as 'a militant trade unionist since birth'. Here is Norman McKillop writing as Toram Beg in the 'Locomotive Journal' on the subject of the non-trade-unionist:

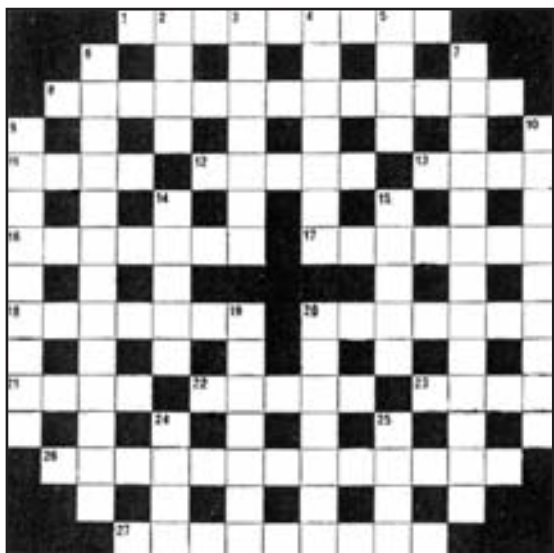
'I can never understand the nonsense which is handed out on the subject of the non-trade-unionist – the fellow who declares that his "principles" will not allow him to become a member of the trade union which looks after the interests of those who work at his craft.

When the "non" is being discussed on the radio, in the Press, or during a session by people in the public eye, all of them seem to be tumbling over themselves to try and do what they describe as "understand the point of view" of this type of individual. The tender regard everybody seems to have for his "principles" and what they say has always the same reaction on my mind.

I just want to say one word in reply – "Boloney".



Prize Crossword No. 47 set by TLC



CLUES ACROSS

- 1 London station (3,6)
 8 Place to eat on the train (10,3)
 11 Man's name (4)
 12 A nun wears one (5)
 13 Relinquish the battle (4)
 16 Free time (7)
 17 The study of rocks etc. (7)
 18 Michael ----- former member of the Goon Shows (7)
 20 Hide (7)
 21 Soft bread cake (4)
 22 Not together (5)
 23 International Standard Book Number (in brief) (4)
 26 Covering for a wheel

(9,4)

- 27 He operates the points on the railway (9)

CLUES DOWN

- 2 Not early (4)
 3 Goes well with egg and bacon (7)
 4 Large town in Berkshire (7)
 5 Consumes food (4)
 6 Window screen consisting of horizontal slats (9,5)
 7 Tailored suit, - not off the peg (4,2,7)
 9 It's the one which catches the worm (5,4)
 10 Converting waste matter into reusable form (9)
 14 Spring flower (5)

15 Circular (5)

- 19 Make clear by describing in more detail (7)
 20 Sweet fruit drink made to be diluted (7)
 24 Dame ---- Dench, actress (4)
 25 Volcanic mountain (4)



MARKS & SPENCER

Solution to Crossword No 46 which appeared in the February edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to **Sean Connolly** from **Llanelli**

The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

ACROSS 3 Sprinter 8 Tuna 9 Lancashire 10 Aria 11 Cold 13 Easel 17 Rebate 18 London 19 Ideas 22 Ecu 24 Neon 25 Tooting Bec 26 Exit 27 Sleepers

DOWN 1 Guard 2 Balaclava 4 Paced 5 Issue 6 Trips 7 Riesling 12 LNER 14 Announcer 15 Artistes 16 Alec 20 Elope 21 Skimp 22 Eager 23 Bogie

Name.....

Address.....

.....Postcode.....

Thanks for all your responses to the 46th ASLEF crossword in the February edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB by the 14th of the issue month.

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FREE LEGAL ADVICE ASLEF also provides first class free legal advice – both for members and for their dependents. During 2009 ASLEF recovered £1,946,190.45 in damages for all types of cases. Call the helpline on 0808 100 8009

EMERGENCIES If you are an ASLEF member who is arrested or being interviewed by the police and need legal assistance – day or night – you can call the members' Emergency Hotline on 0800 587 7530.

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